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TITLE: Teaching HIV Prevention Counseling through Internet-Based Distance Learning: A New Project

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ISSUE: A major need exists for a cost-effective means of teaching HIV Prevention Counseling (HPC) to persons who are unable to attend live training sessions, as well as a means of introducing administrators and legislators to these techniques.

SETTING: Through Next-Generation Internet technology, CDC will be capable of providing training to anyone anywhere and at any time that broadband Internet access is available.

PROJECT: Dartmouth Medical School, in collaboration with CDC, is currently developing a Distance Learning System for training public health workers. The first exemplar program to be delivered over the system will be CDC's new *Fundamentals of HIV Prevention Counseling* course. This self-instructional program will combine cutting-edge technology with a new pedagogical paradigm, the *Virtual Practicum* model. It will be available on-demand for learners to use individually and will include video, audio, text, animations, and graphics to create an immersive training environment. A mentor who is a master teacher and HPC counselor will guide learners through realistic case simulations, interviews with actual counselors and clients, mini lectures, and varied interactive activities. A computer program developed to teach HIV treatment will be presented to demonstrate the *Virtual Practicum* model.

RESULTS: The HPC distance learning program will be evaluated in a multisite national trial upon its completion.

CONCLUSION: This program will make CDC's HPC training available to persons who previously did not have access to it. Additionally, it will serve as a means to review and expand on material learned in seminar-based training, as well as to introduce decision-makers to HPC.

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